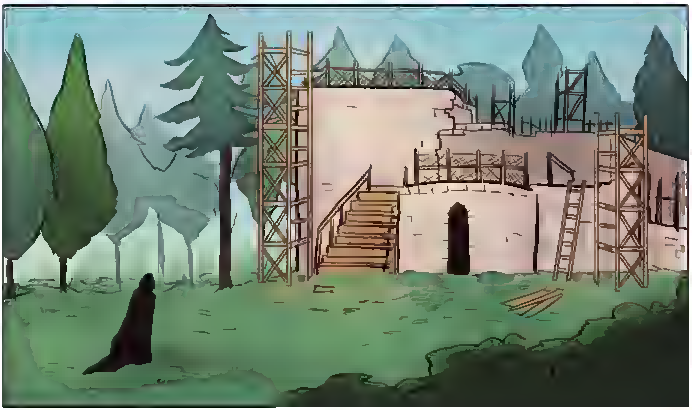
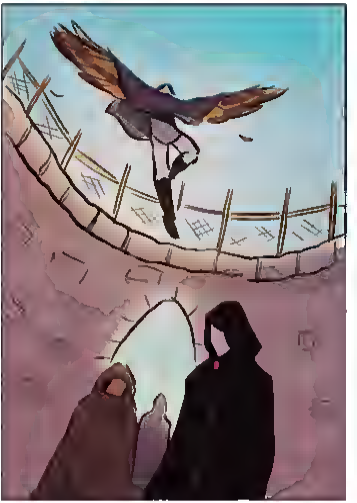
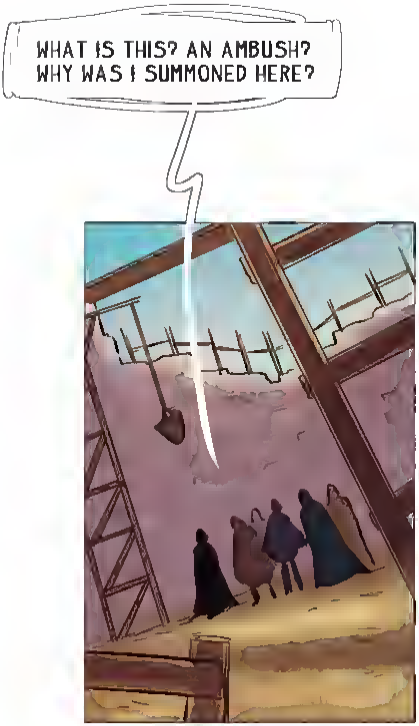
BASILEIA.
ONE THOUSAND YEARS AGO.



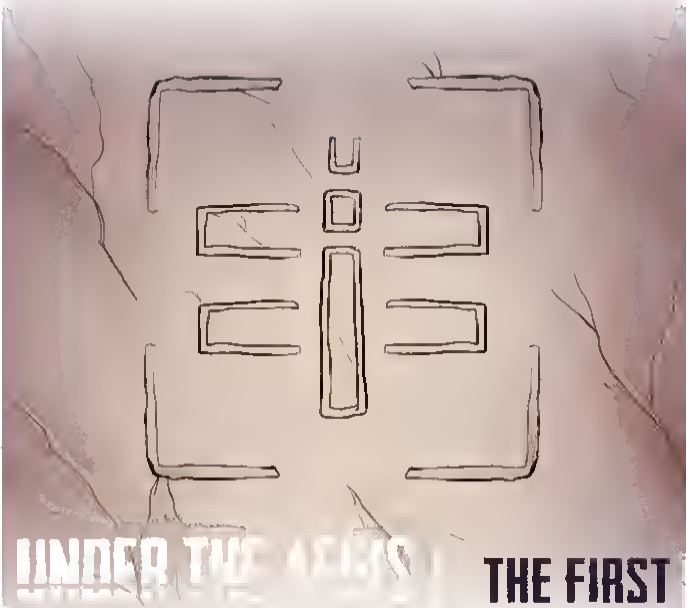



WHAT IS THIS? AN AMBUSH?
WHY WAS I SUMMONED HERE?

FORGIVE ME FOR THE SECRECY, AND FOR MAKING YOU JOURNEY TO BASILEIA.

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING I WISH TO SPEAK OF TO YOU AND A WRITTEN MESSAGE WOULD NOT HAVE SUFFICED

IT IS SOMETHING THAT BEARS DISCUSSION IN PERSON



UNDER THE ARCH

THE FIRST

PART I

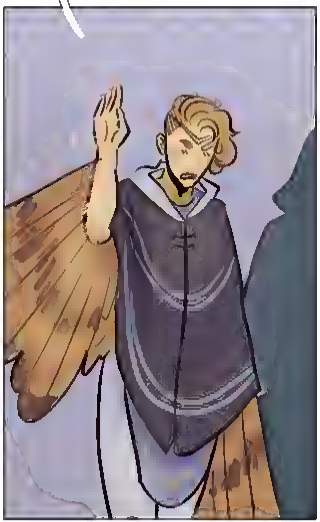
THIS HAD BETTER BE IMPORTANT. I AM IN THE MIDDLE OF A WAR WITH *THAT*, AND I DO NOT HAVE TIME TO WASTE ON *TALKING*.

OH, FUNNY, IT WAS YOUR TALKING THAT STARTED THIS WAR IN THE FIRST PLACE

AND WORRY NOT, ONCE THIS IS OVER I WILL RETURN TO CRUSHING YOUR FEEBLE, ODOROUS ARMIES.

I SUGGEST YOU FINISH IT SOON. I AM TIRED OF HAVING MY PEOPLE CAUGHT IN YOUR SQUABBLES.
I BELIEVE WE SHOULD TURN OUR ATTENTION TO WHAT WE HAVE BEEN GATHERED HERE FOR-

YES, I AGREE, LET US HEAR HIM OUT AND BE DONE WITH IT. THE LESS TIME I SPEND WITH BORING TEMPLANS AND PALE AND PASTY THALASSANS THE BETTER



THOUGH I MUST SAY HER MAJESTY LOOKS VERY WELL INDEED

THIS IS PRECISELY WHY I REQUESTED YOUR PRESENCE. THIS MUST CEASE. OUR PEOPLE ARE SUFFERING AND--
WHAT WOULD YOU KNOW ABOUT MY PEOPLE-?!
OH SOL, DO NOT BE SO DENSE, YOU FENN ARE LOUD ENOUGH FOR THE WHOLE WORLD TO KNOW WHAT!

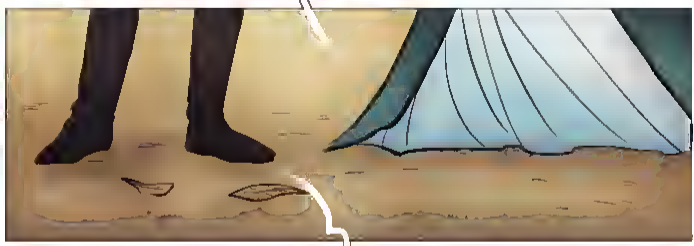
THE WORLD IS INDEED OUT OF BALANCE WITH WAR AFTER WAR. I DO NOT WISH MY PEOPLE TO BECOME INVOLVED IN YET ANOTHER. WE ARE STILL RECOVERING FROM A LONG FAMINE.

WHAT DO YOU PROPOSE, MATTHEW? I TOO REFUSE TO INVOLVE MY TRIBE IN ANOTHER MOONBORN BATTLE.

THEN MOVE YOUR TRIBE SOMEWHERE ELSE IF YOU ARE TOO COWARDLY TO CHOOSE A SIDE, ELIAS!

YOU ARE ONE TO TALK ABOUT TAKING SIDES, SELENE! WHO REFUSED TO AID US EIDENS FOUR YEARS AGO?

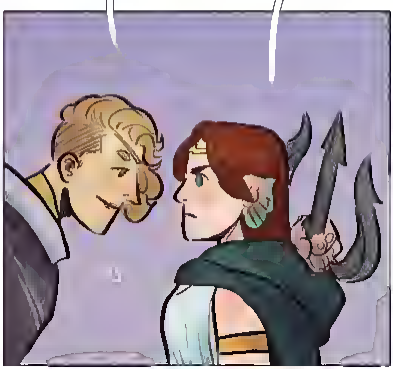
SHE HAD NO PLACE IN OUR DISAGREEMENT! YOU ARE EVER THE SORE LOSER, BARONESS.



AHH, BUT IT WAS WORTH IT...

YOU ARE QUITE BEAUTIFUL WHEN ANGERED, YOUR MAJESTY.

HOW DARE YOU--



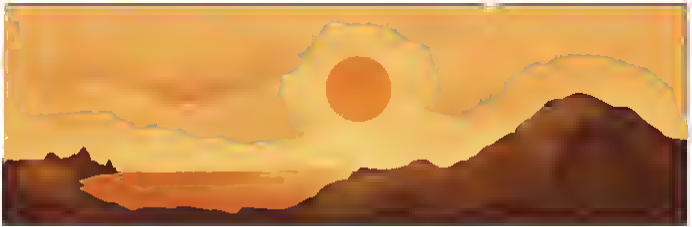
ENOUGH!
YOUR EGOS AND PREJUDICE ARE KILLING YOUR RACE!

AND WHAT ABOUT YOU? YOU CANNOT SEEM TO STOP *YOUR* OWN PEOPLE FROM FIGHTING AMONGST THEMSELVES.
OR STICKING THEIR NOSES IN THE AFFAIRS OF OTHERS, THE GOOD OLD BASILEIAN WAY.

IF YOU TRULY WISH TO BECOME GOOD AND FAIR LEADERS OF YOUR PEOPLE,

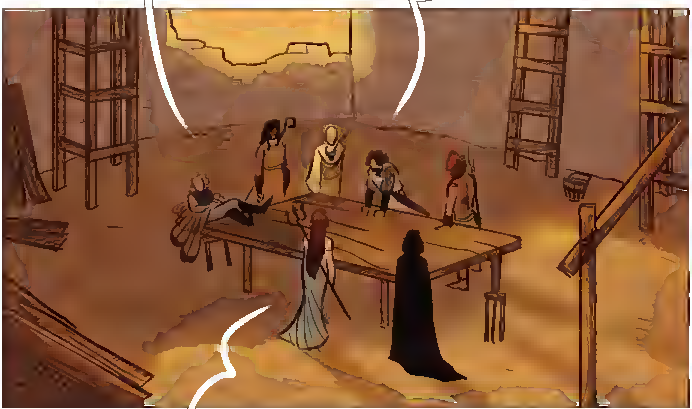
IF YOU TRULY WISH FOR YOUR RACE TO THRIVE...

YOU WILL LISTEN TO WHAT I HAVE TO SAY.



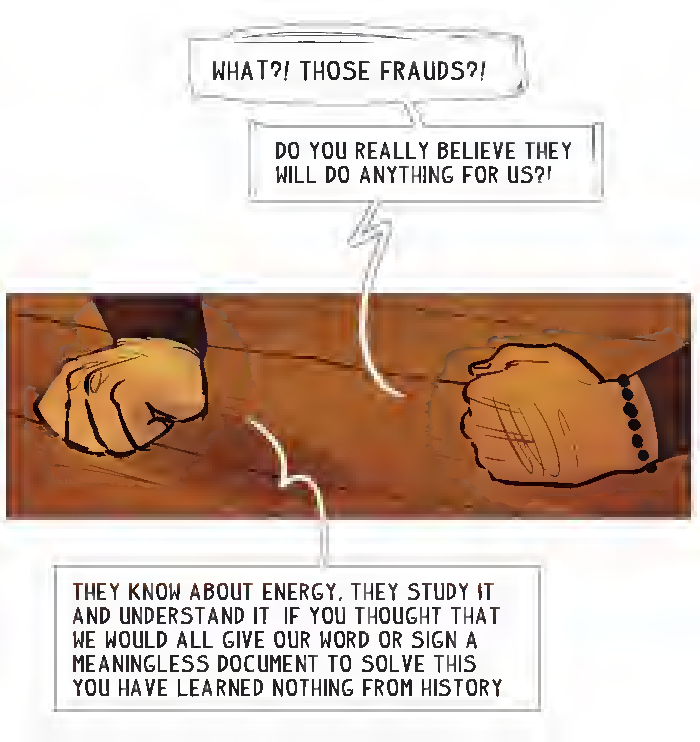
A RITUAL? WHAT GOOD WOULD THAT DO?

I TIRE OF SEEING HOW CONFLICT RAVAGES OUR LANDS. THE MISTRUST BETWEEN ALL OF THE RACES. WE COULD EITHER CONTINUE TO FIGHT EACH OTHER. OR--



WE CREATE AN ALLIANCE AMONGST OURSELVES AND SET AN EXAMPLE.

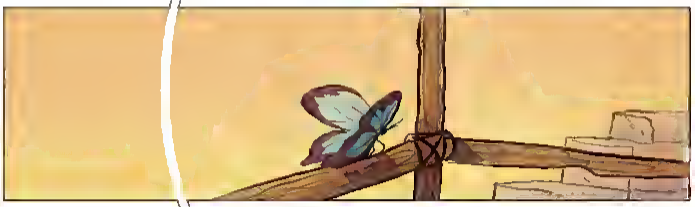
WE DO NOT NEED A RITUAL FOR THAT. EVEN IF I WERE WEAK ENOUGH TO WANT AN ALLIANCE, WHICH I AM *NOT*.
I HAVE CONSULTED WITH SPECIALISTS IN THE MATTER AND THE HIGH PRIEST HAS EXPLAINED THAT--


WHAT?! THOSE FRAUDS?!
DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE THEY WILL DO ANYTHING FOR US?!
THEY KNOW ABOUT ENERGY, THEY STUDY IT AND UNDERSTAND IT IF YOU THOUGHT THAT WE WOULD ALL GIVE OUR WORD OR SIGN A MEANINGLESS DOCUMENT TO SOLVE THIS YOU HAVE LEARNED NOTHING FROM HISTORY

YES. YOU ARE RIGHT. JUST LOOK AT US. WE STRUGGLE TO EVEN SIT IN THE SAME PLACE TOGETHER

COULD YOU TELL US WHAT THE RITUAL ENTAILS?

IT IS A POWERFUL MAGIC. A BINDING MAGIC

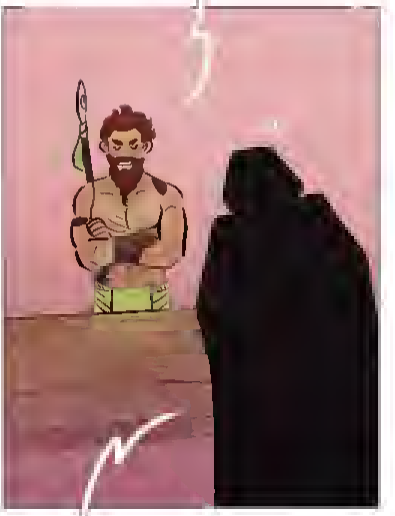


THE HIGH PRIEST IS HESITANT TO PRESIDE OVER THE PROCESS. UNLESS WE ALL UNANIMOUSLY AGREE TO IT.

I DO NOT LIKE THIS

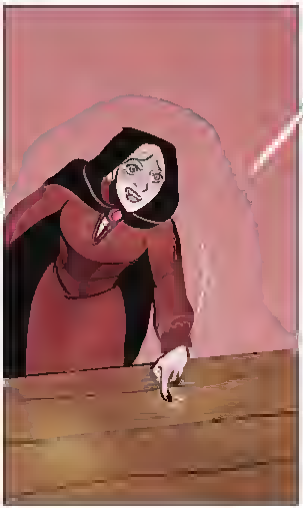
I WILL NOT TAKE PART IN ANY HOCUS-POCUS AND THAT RACE OF PRIESTS DO NOT CONVINCE ME IN THE SLIGHTEST.

THEY ARE NOT EVEN HERE TO SHOW THEIR FACES--



THEY ARE TOO FEW TO EVEN ENTER OUR POLITICS, YOU FOOL!

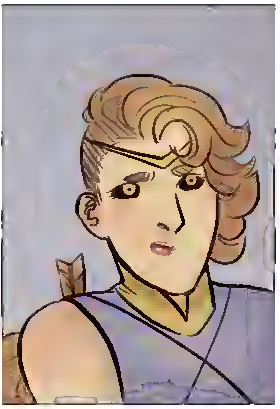
I WANT TO KNOW MORE ABOUT THIS RITUAL AND I DEMAND THAT *NOBODY* LEAVES UNTIL MATTHEW HERE EXPLAINS JUST EXACTLY WHAT IT IS AND WHAT WE NEED TO DO



YOU DARE TO INSULT MY MOTHER?!
WHO ELSE IS AT FAULT FOR BIRTHING A GREAT, BOAR-HEADED OAF LIKE YOU!?

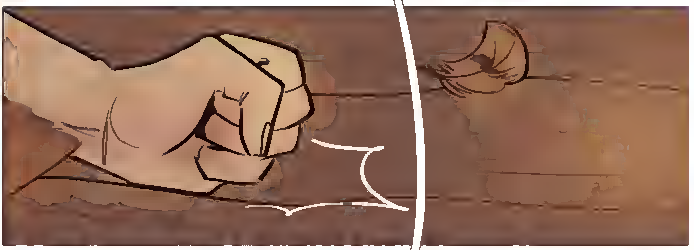
YOUR INTENTIONS ARE NOBLE, MATTHEW, TRULY. BUT I DOUBT THIS IS GOING TO WORK.

THE RACES DESERVE TO LIVE PEACEFULLY, ALL OF THEM, REGARDLESS OF WHO THEY ARE



SO BE IT I ACCEPT! PRIDE AND EGO BE DAMNED

IT IS TIME WE THOUGHT OF FUTURE GENERATIONS INSTEAD OF OUR OWN PETTY WANTS



WHAT SAY THE REST OF YOU?

I AM WITH YOU. I WANT A BETTER LIFE FOR MY TRIBE

MY KINGDOM WOULD BENEFIT GREATLY FROM PEACE. I ALSO ACCEPT

I TOO AM IN ACCORD. I HAVE MEDITATED AND SEEN IT AS THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION

I SHALL ALSO BE A PART OF THIS SOL. ON THE OTHER HAND, SEEMS TO BE AFRAID OF A LITTLE MAGIC--
I AM NO COWARD!
I SHALL NOT BE LEFT OUT!

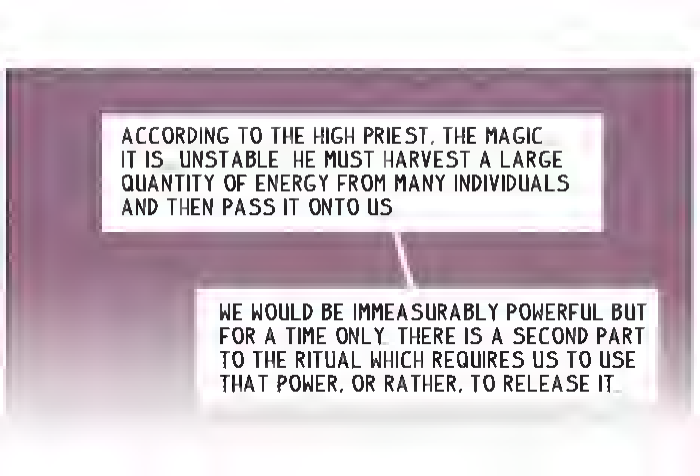
THEN... THEN IT IS AGREED...

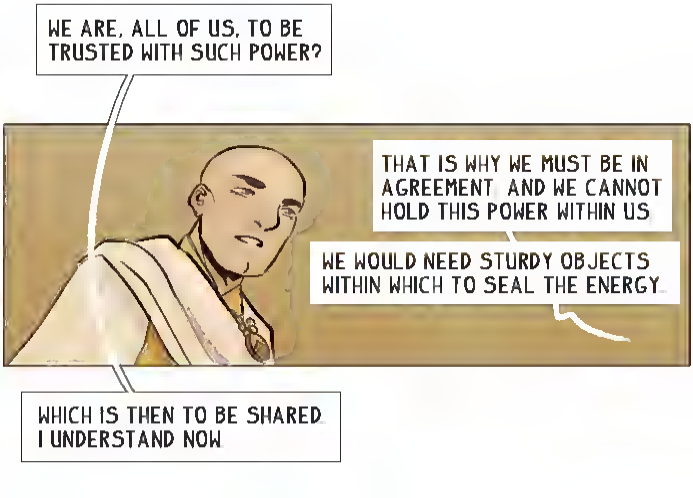
SO, CAN WE NOT CHOOSE SOMEONE ELSE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS RITUAL? WE ARE NOT PRECISELY DISPENSABLE

NO. THIS IS SOMETHING WE MUST DO OURSELVES FIRST. WE ARE THE EXAMPLE. WE HAVE SENT OUR PEOPLE TO WAR FOR US. WE OWE THEM OUR SACRIFICE.

SACRIFICE, EH? I AM BEGINNING TO DOUBT MY DECISION

I WOULD SACRIFICE ANYTHING FOR MY SUBJECTS. WHAT MUST WE DO?


ACCORDING TO THE HIGH PRIEST, THE MAGIC IT IS UNSTABLE. HE MUST HARVEST A LARGE QUANTITY OF ENERGY FROM MANY INDIVIDUALS AND THEN PASS IT ONTO US
WE WOULD BE IMMEASURABLY POWERFUL BUT FOR A TIME ONLY. THERE IS A SECOND PART TO THE RITUAL WHICH REQUIRES US TO USE THAT POWER, OR RATHER, TO RELEASE IT.


WE ARE, ALL OF US, TO BE TRUSTED WITH SUCH POWER?
THAT IS WHY WE MUST BE IN AGREEMENT. AND WE CANNOT HOLD THIS POWER WITHIN US.
WE WOULD NEED STURDY OBJECTS WITHIN WHICH TO SEAL THE ENERGY.
WHICH IS THEN TO BE SHARED. I UNDERSTAND NOW.

THESE OBJECTS... THEY WOULD HAVE TO BE THINGS WE WOULD NOT TRUST ANYONE ELSE WITH... THINGS WE MUST CARRY ON US ALWAYS

MY PEOPLE ARE OF FEW POSSESSIONS

I ONLY HAVE THIS

I BELIEVE THAT...YES. YES THEY MIGHT.

PRESENT DAY

IT'S TIME TO GO.